

Waterfowl Advisory Committee  
Minutes, May 13, 2008  
Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center  
Georgetown, South Carolina

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Sam Hiott, Carlyle Blakeney, Jr., Campbell Coxe, Lin Fore, Craig Sasser, Phil Wilkinson, Stephen Thomas

MEMBERS ABSENT: William "Tadpole" Baldwin, Jr., Parker Barnes, Jr., Billy Ray Cato, Robin Inabinet, Craig LeSchack

DNR STAFF PRESENT: Breck Carmichael, Sam Chappellear, Jamie Dozier, Dean Harrigal, Susan Johnson, Derrell Shipes, Sgt. Ryan Williams

OTHERS PRESENT: Kelly Fuller with *The Sun News*

Chair Hiott opened the meeting and the minutes of the February 12, 2008 meeting were approved as submitted.

REGION IV WATERFOWL UPDATE: Sam Chappellear, Region IV Wildlife Coordinator, delivered a power point presentation. Chappellear stated Region IV consists of 9 coastal counties and includes 6 Category I (draw hunt) Waterfowl Management Areas and 8 Category II (non-draw) Waterfowl Management Areas. Other waterfowl hunting opportunities in Region IV are the Francis Marion National Forest, Edisto River, Palachucola, and Webb Center Wildlife Management Areas.

Region IV waterfowl area totals include: 27,708 acres of managed wetlands, 193 miles of maintained dikes, 276 trunks/water control structures and 223 acres planted in crops. Chappellear stated area management activities include moist-soil management, prescribed fire, invasive species management, dike and water control structure maintenance, banding, next box maintenance and waterfowl season preparation. Chappellear commended Region staff for their continuous hard work and accomplishments in light of fewer staff than historically. Additional challenges facing staff are funding, local waterfowl population estimates, feral hog damage/population, aquatic weeds, environmental changes/global warming/drought, dike erosion (weather and boat related) and managing public expectations.

The 2007/2008 Region IV waterfowl season results are: Category I - 725 hunters who harvested 2,174 ducks. Adult/youth hunt areas (Bonneau Ferry and Donnelley WMAs) accommodated 111 hunters who harvested 408 ducks, youth only hunts (Federal and State youth days) accommodated 99 youth who harvested 283 ducks.

Most recent accomplishments in the Region are treatment of 4,326 acres of noxious aquatic vegetation within the last 4 years; cooperated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct area burning; just completed a NOAA grant on Donnelley/Bear Island which resulted in 26 new water control structures, 18 structures being repaired, 27,036

linear feet of dike refurbished, and 10,198 linear feet of drainage improvements completed. Chappellear further stated NAWCA grants on Cedar and Murphy Islands are being administered, staff is creating a 150 acre greentree reservoir on Palachucola WMA via a WRP restoration grant; a long-reach trackhoe has been acquired on the Upper Coastal Waterfowl Project; an older trackhoe has been replaced at Bear Island/Donnelley WMAs; staff is in the process of purchasing an amphibious undercarriage for the trackhoe at the Upper Coastal Waterfowl Project; and banding of a significant number of waterfowl is accomplished each year.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Deputy Director Breck Carmichael distributed copies of DNR's weekly legislative update (copy attached to the original minutes). Carmichael stated DNR is facing up to a \$1 million cut in State funds.

S.452 passed which authorizes DNR to establish an alligator hunting season. The season will occur September 13 to October 11 and will be by computer drawing. A total of 250 permits will be issued in 4 alligator management zones (public or private lands, wildlife management areas excluded). DNR plans to have voluntary training sessions to cover harvest techniques, safety and other topics for individuals selected. There is an on-line (only) application which should be available on DNR's web site within the next few weeks.

H.4547, a bill that makes technical changes to the law establishing the State Waterfowl Hunting Stamp allowing DNR to sell it on line is awaiting the Governor's signature.

H.4548, a bill providing catch/length limits pertaining to Striped Bass in the lower Santee Cooper River systems during specified periods should soon become law. These were recommendations from the Santee Cooper Striped Bass Stakeholders Group.

H.4862, a bill relaxing the turkey baiting statute to be more in line with the current dove baiting statute, was recommitted to the House Ag and Natural Resources Committee.

H.4952, a bill prohibiting the introduction of a fertility control agent or chemical substance into any species of wildlife (with the exception of compounds used to control rodents) without a permit from DNR was returned to the House with Senate amendments.

S.428 is legislation concerning surface water withdrawals. Currently, SC has little or no regulation of withdrawal of water from public waters (rivers, streams, creeks). This bill still resides in the Senate, and has unfortunately pitted conservation groups and industry against each other.

S.552, relating to the release of pen-raised mallards and turkeys as shooting preserve species would remove the prohibition against license transfer. This bill currently resides in the Senate Fish, Game and Forestry Committee.

S.706 is legislation to regulate hunting deer with dogs. DNR has established a facilitated stakeholder group to discuss this issue.

S.953, a bill to move DNR's Law Enforcement Division to the Department of Public Safety has not had any movement.

**ATLANTIC FLYWAY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS:** Wildlife Biologist Dean Harrigal reviewed several issues discussed at the recent Atlantic Flyway Council meeting: (1) Increase in the bag limit for wood ducks from 2 to 3; there is a possibility that it may happen this year, however, the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways must come to a consensus on how to monitor the harvest of the birds using adult males as the cohort for monitoring; (2) Elimination of the 2-hen restriction on mallards. The Atlantic Flyway Council has recommended the US Fish and Wildlife Service remove the 2-hen restriction from the mallard bag for 2008. The Service will act on this at the Regulations meeting in June; and (3) Make the total bag the same as the mallard bag of 4. This issue was discussed at the Council meeting but not acted on by the Atlantic Flyway Council.

**2008-2009 STATE WATERFOWL STAMP BUDGET:** For information, Dean Harrigal distributed copies of staff's proposed budget for waterfowl stamp funds, which will be submitted to the DNR Board for approval (copy attached to the original minutes). The budget requests approval for the expenditure of \$184,000 for FY2008-09.

**YAWKEY PEER REVIEW DISCUSSION:** Breck Carmichael stated DNR staff (John Frampton, Breck Carmichael, Sam Chappelle and Jamie Dozier) had recently toured the property, reviewing each site referenced in the Yawkey Peer Review Report. Carmichael stated prior to the Report leaving the Committee, an analysis be made of suggested recommendations and what accomplishments to that end have been fulfilled since the initial report of the Peer Review Team in 2004. Carmichael further suggested after the analysis, a "current needs" report be issued by the Peer Review Team, which will be submitted to members of the Waterfowl Advisory Committee and the Yawkey Trustees. A decision was made to incorporate an addendum to the initial Peer Review Report reflecting progress that has been made. Once this has been completed, it will be submitted to Chair Sam Hiott for review. Committee Member Phil Wilkinson suggested the Yawkey Trustees might like to tour the property with someone on the Peer Review Team.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Committee Member Fore, on behalf of the Five Rivers Coalition, inquired about navigable waters blocked to public access by private landowners in the vicinity of Carr and Little Carr Creeks in Georgetown County. The Coalition has received constituent comments regarding this issue. Fore asked for DNR help/support to address the issue with the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) and/or DHEC. It was suggested this could perhaps be an issue to be decided by the SC Attorney General's Office. Dean Harrigal stated the COE has an Enforcement Section for Navigable Waters. Fore stated the COE has been contacted but has yet to respond. Carmichael stated he will ask DNR Environmental staff if they can recommend someone to contact at the COE.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

For informational purposes, Carmichael displayed maps of the Prairie Pothole Region reflecting loss of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres in the Dakotas, Montana, Minnesota and Iowa. Carmichael stated the loss of the acreage was primarily fueled by corn growing/alternative uses. The maps reflected areas that were formerly CRP grasslands that provided waterfowl nesting habitat.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS:**

Committee Member Fore stated he had heard many positive comments from local Georgetown County residents regarding the work which has been performed on South Island as a result of the Peer Review.

**TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:**

A tentative date of August 5, 2008 in Columbia.

DRAFT